



Public Hearing – January 30, 2023  
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Katie S. Dykes

### **House Bill No. 6484 – An Act Concerning Certain Harvesting of Horseshoe Crabs**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding House Bill No. 6484 – An Act Concerning Certain Harvesting of Horseshoe Crabs. The purpose of this bill is to ban hand-harvesting of horseshoe crabs in Connecticut. This change would functionally implement a commercial fishery moratorium in the state as almost all commercial harvest of horseshoe crabs in Connecticut occurs via hand-harvest.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) agrees that horseshoe crab populations should be conserved and is therefore **neutral** on the proposed legislation. Regulatory restrictions enacted by DEEP in 2022 successfully reduced commercial horseshoe crab harvest, producing an estimated 92% reduction in annual landings per preliminary assessments. The Department also noted substantially reduced participation in the horseshoe crab fishery in 2022, suggesting many Connecticut commercial fishers targeting whelk and American eel sought out alternative sources of bait (commercially harvested horseshoe crabs are used as bait in these fisheries). The economic impact of a full fishery closure may therefore be lessened in the current environment relative to recent years.

DEEP remains committed to close monitoring of LIS horseshoe crab populations in partnership with New York Department of Environmental Conservation and will continue to advocate for conservative interstate horseshoe crab management at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Department's legislative liaison Harrison Nantz at [Harrison.Nantz@ct.gov](mailto:Harrison.Nantz@ct.gov).